critical digest

139 East 47 Street NY, 17, NY
EL 5-6894 T. M. Kraus

Feb 15, 1956 Vol VIII No 6. The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter. $25 year. $6. 50 quarter

This Week

A Streetcar Named Desire-City Center 2/15 Limited run starring Tallulah Bankhead, staged by Herbert Machiz.

The Ponder Heart-Music Box 2/16. Playwrights Company presents new play by Fields-Chodorov with David Wayne, Una Merkel.

Evening of Shaw-Cherry Lane 2/20...Age of Grace-Blackfriars 2/20...Miss Julie-Phoenix 2/21

Next Week

Debut- Holiday 2/22.. Candida-Downtown Theatre 2/23...Romeo & Juliet-Jan Hus 2/23...Rosmersholm-Provincetown 2/24 ...Thunder Rock-Bway Cong. Church 2/26.

Interview Hi-Lite

Why should anyone else lose money on you, Ida Lublenski Ehrlich asked Funke, Times. Mrs. Ehrlich is the adaptor, director, producer, press agent, ad man, etc of "Le Gendre de M Poirier" which she is presenting for 2 weeks at Community Church, 40 E 35. School teacher has spent $2500 of her own money on the production, the fifth of her own she has put on. At least I've seen my plays on the stage and not in the trunk, she summed up.

Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

Middle of the Night- ANTA 2/8. Two critics--Coleman, Mirror, and McClain, Journal American---filed rave notices for Josh Logan production of Paddy Chayefsky's play starring the return to legit of Edward G. Robinson. Majority of daily reviewers filed mild pro reviews noting that it was a worthwhile evening in the theatre thanks to Robinson. Mirror aisle-sitter lauded it as a tender, touching play, a provocative hit. Journal American appraiser hopes that author inaugurates something new in the modern theatre--drama from normal, middle class people. He also rated Gena Rowlands for a fine debut performance. Though all credited Robinson with a fine job, rest of critics feared play was too much like a slow moving soap opera. Atkinson, Times, could find nothing wrong, but he found it just average drama. Chapman, News, doubted if part was worth the trip east for the star. Despite the author's gift for attractive sentimental realism, Watts, Post, noted it was not a drama of size. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, complained that parts of play were inaudible.

The Adding Machine-Phoenix 2/9 . Second in series of New Directors presentations sponsored by Roger Stevens was revival of Elmer Rice classic staged by Bill Butler, director of Third Person. 6 performances were given with cast including Sam Jaffe, Margaret Hamilton, and Howard da Silva. Atkinson, Times, and Watts, Post, enjoyed it , while Kerr, Herald Tribune, and Coleman, Mirror, feared the 1923 play was out-of-date. Times viewer found it an engrossing drama, still original and stimulating. Times and Post agreed that Butler did an imaginative job in his staging.

The Private Life of the Master Race-Open Stage-15 Second Ave 1/30. Three pro notices filed for first production at new 75 seat theatre which is two flights up. Eric Bentley's adaption of Bertolt Brecht's anti Nazi play was approved by Atkinson, Times, Herridge, Post, and Geor. Variety. Production was rated by Times man as talented and interesting, with some of the acting particularly exhilarating. Post editor billed it as taut and well-acted. Only the Post found the 20 year old script dated, other critics found it still apt and exciting. Norma Francis directed. Alan Anslarly, Bernard Pollock, Barbara Lane and John Leighton were singled out by reviewers for their performances.

The 48th St. Theatre is doomed and soon will be torn down to make way for a garage or an office building. The house which has been closed since August when the 10,000 gallon water tank on the roof fell into the theatre, has been sold by the Joseph Leblang estate. Surveys show that it would cost too much to rebuilt it for legit theatre use.

PLAYS

The Great Sebastians moved to the Coronet... New opening dates for City Center Light Opera Company are-King and I-April 18, Kiss Me Kate-May 9, and Carmen Jones-May 30... Small fire at Majestic Theatre put out while Fanny in performance. No one was hurt... May 30 set for debut of Shangri-La musical ... Plain and Fancy to close March 3... Theatre Libre Company will present The Beautiful Changes in March... Broadway Theatre booked for 2 weeks starting Feb 21 to show Lew Ayres' films "The World's Greatest Religions."

PLAYERS

Next season Helen Hayes plans to appear in Cock-a-Doodle Daisy, Cornelia Otis Skinner will play in The Second Monkey, and Rosalind Russell will appear in the stage version of Aunt Mame... Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune, will lecture on playwrighting at Yale this term... Eli Wallach will return to Teahouse of August Moon Feb 21... Elwood Smith replaces Earle Hyman in No Time for Sergeants... Joseph Rumshinsky, Yiddish compser of 100 musicals, died at age 74... Owen-Tolbert-Hewitt, who was appearing in No Time for Sergeants, died at age 58.

VAUDEVILLE

300th 8 act show at Palace features Sibyl Bowan, Wally Dean... New Music Hall revue is "Southern Medley" with Reta Shaw, Peiro Brothers.

OTHER BROADWAYS

New Boston resident stock company opens March 1 at Fine Arts Theatre with Thieves Carnival... Wagon Wheel Theatre, Rockton, Ill, opened Feb 15 with Oh, Men, Oh Women in new $100,000 house ... Ruth Chatterton playing a 3 week run at Fred Miller Theatre, Milwaukee, Wisc ... Edward Arnold playing in All My Sons at Tucson Winter Playhouse... Spanish language version of Teahouse of August Moon sponsored by ANTA to open in April.

SUMMER PLAYHOUSES

St. John Terrell's 8th season at Lambertville, NJ, Music circus opens June 2 with Knickerbocker Holiday... Two new summer theatre manager organizations formed. Producers using name talent have banded together as "Council of Stock Theatres." while others have formed "Council of Resident Stock Theatres."

THEATRE TV & RADIO NOTES

Maurice Evans and Lilli Palmer star in March 15-NBC TV Taming of the Shrew... John Huston will direct NBC-TV Lysistrata, Marilyn Monroe will star... Decca to release High Tor album of CBS-TV show several weeks before telecast

SHOW TRAIN NOTES

150 from Montreal viewed 5 shows during their 4 day NY stay... 52 from N. Carolina viewed No Time For Sergeants ... 172 from Milwaukee viewed 4 shows, and returned via Capital Airlines.

TWA and Alex Cohen's Theatre Tours have worked out package theatre tours in 3, 4 and 5 day excursions.

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

SLUG THAT PLAY... NY critics, unlike Elliot Norton, the Boston Post critic recently taken off Shubert press lists for double-slugging Ponder Heart, are usually content to walk away from a critically injured theatrical infant and let it suffer a slow death, states McHarry, News. But drama reporter believes that the NY critics have an obligation to wade in after their groggy victims and finish them. Playgoing with no weak sisters around to disappoint audiences would pick up. Even the Shuberts would profit, he notes. But critics are smart about free tickets and will probably not start what McHarry wants, he admits. With no free tickets to lose, Norton could come to NY with his euthanasia machine and get to work, reporter suggests.

COLUMN TIPS... NY casts will be paid by check instead of cash to avoid holdups, hears Winchell... Marcel Marceau had a clause in his City Center contract that producer Jean Dalrymple could not talk to him about business, the theatre or his performance, reports Kilgallen;... Red Roses for Me may be put on at special City Center matinees, notes Watt, News, while Zolotow, Times, understands O'Casey play may be presented at large 2nd Ave movie house.

HALL OF FAME... A Broadway Hall of Fame was suggested by Sobol, Journal American. Columnist suggested modest start of busts and/or plaques could be put in one of the theatre lobbies. No one would be eligible who had not been a dominant Broadway figure for at least 25 years. An equally modest start at a "Theatre Hall of Fame" was made at Fulton Theatre, Lancaster, Pa. several years ago.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Times reader complains that from seats B10-12 at Longacre he barely saw Boris Karloff's performance in The Lark... Do the playgoers who madly rush for the exit the moment the final curtain starts to descend realize how rude they are the players, playgoers and author, asks a C. D. subscriber.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Disc jockey plugging of 3 Penny Opera theme may kill the song, but it has also doubled business at Theatre de Lys show, sums up Peper, WT & S... Innkeepers might have been better, ponders Watts, Post, if Geraldine Page and Darren McGavin could have exchanged roles... Off Broadway theatre has done an amazing job of exploiting an incurable disease: the actor's urge to pretend to be somebody else, notes Chapman, News.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

The Adding Machine is one of the delights of the season. Perfectly cast, ably produced, and with inspired direction, the Elmer Rice classic is apt and powerful. Few, if any, playwrights today can or bother to capture the sting of social satire as well as Rice did in 1923.

Middle of the Night is a slow, dull affair about slow, dull people. It proves only that Edward G. Robinson deserves a real play and soon. Grant the author's premise that most people are boring and you still do not have enough of an excuse for a full length play. As a 45 minute TV script it may have been fine, but as a 90 minute legit script it is awful.

OFF BROADWAY

Carnegie Hall Playhouse will open on first floor of Carnegie Hall building in April seating 299. Madxa Productions have a 3 year lease on the house which was a rehearsal hall of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Evening of Shaw, the 2 one act plays recently presented at Equity Library Theatre, will open Feb 20 at Cherry Lane produced by Charles Olsen & James Preston... Hauptmann's The Beaver Coat will open at Greenwich Mews March 7... David Driscoll's new play The Seventh Omen will be presented by Columbia Theatre Associates Feb 15... The Cobweb's Glory by Bryan O'Conner will be presented Feb 17-19 at Master Institute by Thomas Davis Irish Plyayers... French language production of Giradoux' L'Appollon de Bellac will be presented at Carl Fisher Hall Feb 15 by French Art Theatre for 4 weeks... Why Not Tonight will be presented at Show-Case Theatre, Finch College Feb 20-May 3.

7 30 PM Wed performances of The Private Life of the Master Race presented at Open Stage... Deric Riegen's A Family of Waiting presented by Originals Only... Much Ado About Nothing added to Shakespeare Theatre Workshop Repertory March 1... Exodis will be presentd at Barbizon Plaza Mar29 by Craftsman Group.

An Evening of Wilde presented at Davenport Theatre, 138 E 27, drew a pair of split notices. Salome production drew mild pro from Geor, Variety, with James Coco and Jane Norvell turning in fine portrayls inspite of Wilde's overwritten script. Herridge, Post, just didnt think it was worth the effort. Neither critic liked first part of bill, Wilde's A Florentine Tragedy.

THEATRE RECORD COMMENTS

"Melodies of Jerome Kern, Volumes I & II" (Walden) okayed by Wilson, Times, and Variety reviewer as fitting, tuneful tribute. Times man liked performances on first volume by June Ericson, Warren Galjour, and Jay Harnick, better than the performances on second disc by Christina Lind, David Daniels.

Pipe Dream original cast album seems to Times critic to prove that Rodgers & Hammerstein are settling into a self-made rut, giving the score a disappointing air of familiarity.

THEATRE TV COMMENTS

The Good Fairy presented by NBC TV Evans with Julie Harris, Walter Slezak and Cyril Ritchard received a rave notice from Gould Times, was panned as out of date by Crosby, Herald Tribune, and mild approvals from Horne, WT&S, and Gross, News. Adaption by JeanKerr was praised by latter two critics.

NYC THEATRE REPORT

*Comprehensive coverage of NYC daily critics comments and ratings on current Broadway, Off Broadway, Summer Theatre. Plus complete news roundup of NY theatre. Ratings of theatre books and records also.

*Weekly NYC theatre newsletter. 8th yr. Perfect present for theatre investors, ticket buyers, producers, students, etc.

*$25 per year $6.50 per quarter
CRITICAL DIGEST-139 E 47, NYC